

9/11 victims' relatives glad Port Authority will move Saudi flag artwork from Ground Zero



By JOHN ANNESE

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A sculpture depicting the flag of Saudi Arabia, part of an exhibit called 'Candy Nations,' outside the Oculus, one of the buildings that replaced the original World Trade Center. (JOHANNES EISELE / AFP/Getty Images)

A group of 9/11 families called the decision to move a sculpture depicting the Saudi Arabian flag from the World Trade Center campus the “right thing to do.”

In a statement Monday, relatives of more than a dozen Sept. 11 victims blasted the Port Authority for installing “Candy Nations” next to the Oculus, one of the buildings that replaced the original World Trade Center.

The exhibit features the flags of all the G20 nations — including Saudi Arabia — as colorful wrappers on 9-foot tall pieces of candy.

“The sculpture’s presence at this site, depicting the (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) flag, is an outrageous affront to the 9/11 community and all other Americans who seek justice for the attacks on our nation on September 11, 2001,” the statement reads.

“There is nothing ‘sweet’ or whimsical about including the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia at Ground Zero in this exhibit called ‘Candy Nations.’ There is only insult and hypocrisy.”

Families of 850 Sept. 11 victims are suing the Saudi government, alleging it gave financial and material support to the hijackers of the four jets used in the attacks. Fifteen of the 19 hijackers held Saudi passports.

“We surely recognize both the artist’s right to create the exhibit and the Port Authority’s right to host the exhibit. Rather, this is about choice. An ill-conceived, wrong choice,” the statement reads.

The exhibit, created by French artist Laurence Jenkell in 2011, has been shown in 25 countries and was placed along Broadway in the Garment District last fall. It was installed at the Oculus in December.

It drew heat from right-wing media sites and Twitter users last week.

On Sunday, the Port Authority announced it would move the entire installation to Kennedy Airport and placing the sculptures throughout the JFK AirTrain system.

“The Port Authority is apparently now taking the right action by this week removing the sculpture from the plaza at Ground Zero,” the families’ statement reads. “Its apparent plan to relocate the exhibit to JFK International Airport is questionable as well, for obvious reasons. But surely the sculpture should be nowhere near the site of this mass murder.”

The statement was signed by the spouses, children, siblings and parents of 13 9/11 victims, as well as two survivors who escaped the South Tower before it fell.

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